

# Judicial Council Forms Manual

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS

Judicial Council of California  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
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# Introduction

We are in a new era of forms production at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), with staff members producing forms in-house using OmniForm. The finished forms are fillable, with fields that users can fill in on a computer.

This manual is intended to provide guidelines and specifications, resulting in greater uniformity in the forms and an easier task for the individuals who are involved in the creation and revision of forms. An effort has been made to keep the manual concise while still covering the essential material.

The existing body of Judicial Council forms dates back to 1974, so there is a large variation in formats. This manual focuses on commonly used formats and styles, while recognizing there is often a need to customize a form's design in particular situations.

Examples of different form elements and styles are included in the manual, in 10-point Arial or Times New Roman and indented. These examples are meant only to provide a sample of format guidelines and the type of information that would be given in that element. The manual is not created using OmniForm, so the examples do not appear exactly as they do in the forms. Nevertheless, the examples should answer most questions and provide a starting point when drafting forms.

Plain-language forms are covered in a separate section of this manual.

You are encouraged to frequently visit the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board. There you will find manuals, templates, and Designer Toolkit elements that you can copy into your own OmniForm program, as well as shared tips from other users. The manual alerts you about Designer Toolkit elements available on the bulletin board, but new elements will be added from time to time.



# Tips for Writing or Printing a Form

1. When creating or extensively revising a form, look for a similar form and use it as a guide. Examining forms that accomplish the same goal as your form will save you time by giving you ideas about how to structure and word your form.
2. **AVOID ALL CAPS. EVEN THOUGH CAPITAL LETTERS ARE BIG, THEY ARE HARD TO READ.** Also Avoid Sentences And Long Titles In Which Each Word Begins With A Capital Letter. (They Also Are Hard To Read.)  
*Exception:* Brief headings or instructions (under two lines), usually in boxes.
3. Number or letter each item (and subitem and sub-subitem) on a form. In general, all text should be attached to a number or letter (unless it relates to the whole item).  
*Exception:* Notice of Hearing boxes.
4. Colons indicate a blank in which information is to be supplied.
5. Do not use “(s)” and its ilk—for example: “Plaintiff(s) request(s) that subjects and verbs agree.” Instead, use the singular and, if necessary, indicate that additional parties can be named—for example, “Plaintiff (*name each*).”  
*Exception:* The word “children” is frequently used in family law forms, often followed by a space to list the children by names and dates of birth.
6. Think about the length of the response that will be inserted in a blank space. Be sure to leave enough room. Bad example: “Plaintiff (*name each*):                      requests an order. . . .”
7. Avoid legalisms. For example, don’t say in a caption, “In the matter of the adoption petition of,” when “Adoption of:” suffices. Don’t say, “In re the matter of” or even “In re.” Describe the action.
8. Don’t use the slash to indicate alternatives (his/her, amend/replace, and/or). Instead use “or” or “and” or “X, Y, or both.”
9. Avoid “as” (use “because”); “as to” (use “regarding” or “concerning”); “pursuant to” (use “under” or “as required by”); or “reason why” (use “reason that” or “the reason is . . .”). Don’t use the verb “list” when you mean “state,” “specify,” or “give.” Use “list” when you want a list.
10. Do not use the passive, such as **IT IS ORDERED**. Instead, use **THE COURT ORDERS**.
11. Capitalize the abbreviation for number: “No.” Do not use the # sign.
12. Emphasis can be italic or bold depending on level of emphasis. Use these attributes sparingly. Also use them consistently. There should be a rationale to deciding to make certain things bold or italic—the items should be alike or related in some way.

13. Don't try to cram too many requests for information into one item. Break them into separate items. Bad example:

9. The sale of the real property legally described ☐ on reverse ☐ in Attachment 9 and other property sold as a unit described ☐ on reverse ☐ in Attachment 9a is confirmed to *(name)*:  
*(manner of vesting title)*:  
for the sale price of: \$ on the following terms *(use attachment or reverse if necessary)*:

Good example:

9. The sale of the real property is confirmed as follows:
- a. Confirmed to *(name)*:
  - b. Manner of vesting title *(specify)*:
  - c. Sale price: \$ on the following terms *(use attachment or reverse if necessary)*:
  - d. ☐ Other property sold as a unit described ☐ in Attachment 9d ☐ as follows:
  - e. Legally described ☐ in Attachment 9e ☐ as follows:
14. Along the same lines, consider the overall look of the form. Is it too dense and hard to read? Are there spaces between paragraphs and subparagraphs? Sometimes it is better to use another page—particularly if the reverse side of the page would otherwise be blank—rather than shoehorning too much text onto a page.
15. Lowercase “petitioner,” “respondent,” and names of actions (unless you are referring to the form itself). Example: order to show cause, but *Order to Show Cause* (form DE-123).
16. Watch parallelism. For example, don't say: “You are ordered to appear at the date, time, and place.” Instead say: “You are ordered to appear on the date and at the time and place.”

<p><b>IMPORTANT TIP FOR PRINTING A FORM:</b> If you are printing an Adobe Acrobat PDF of a form (from the California Courts Web site, for example), in the print dialogue box <b>be sure the box on the right-hand side that reads “shrink oversized pages to paper size” is NOT checked.</b> Otherwise, the form will be shrunk and the margins will be incorrect.</p>
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# General Form Specifications

## FILE MANAGEMENT

It is important to use good file management procedures to keep track of drafts of forms and to be sure the latest draft is the one that goes to editing for review, to RUPRO, and ultimately to the Judicial Council.

**Every time a revision is made, a new draft number and date of revision must be indicated on the form itself—usually in the court clerk’s box—and in the filename of the form.**

DRAFT 4  
1-30-05

A master folder contains the most current Judicial Council forms, as approved, adopted, or revised by the Judicial Council, in both OmniForm and Adobe Acrobat PDF versions. Access to the master folder is strictly limited. A shared directory has been established for draft forms.

## MARGINS

All printing, from the form number at the top to the adoption or approval date and citations at the bottom, must be within the margins.

All margins (left, right, top, and bottom): .5 inch

## FONTS

All text should be Arial. The size varies from 6 to 10 points. See the sections of the manual that discuss specific form elements for the size used with each element. Note that apostrophes are straight, not curly, in this font. (The fonts are different for plain-language forms; see page 32.)

American LegalNet (ALN) adds fillable text fields to the forms before they are posted on the California Courts Web site. Users can then fill out the forms on computers. The font is Times New Roman to distinguish the user’s insertions from the form itself. The size varies from 8 to 12 points. Our responsibility is to allow adequate space for the required text. (See pages 23–24 for more information.)

## LINES AND BOXES

Lines and the borders of boxes are all one-half point.

## ITEM NUMBERING

Almost every item of text in the body of a form has a number or letter. To show the relationships between the items, each level is indented below the previous one. (Also see pages 18–19.)

Designer Toolkit templates for the item levels are available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

The order of item numbering and indenting is:

1.
  - a.
    - (1)
      - (a)
        - (i)
          - (A)

## SPACING

### After Periods and Colons

One space follows a period. Two spaces follow a colon.

### Line Spacing Within a Paragraph

All body text has 12-point spacing. If space is very tight and there are no check boxes or fill areas within the paragraph, single spacing can be used.

### Line Spacing Between Paragraphs

If space permits, a line space is used between paragraphs to provide greater readability. If you need to make a form fit on a desired number of pages, it may not be possible to have spaces between paragraphs. However, if the form is looking too crowded, consider adding another page.

Paragraphs with lettered or numbered subparagraphs usually have a line space between the subparagraphs.

## Spacing Between Elements

In OmniForm, the item letter or number and the text for that item should always be created as separate text fields. It is important to keep the spacing between these elements consistent. The specifications for spacing are:

Between an item number or letter and the following text or check box:	.10 inch
Between a check box and the following text:	.10 inch
For check boxes within a sentence, before and after a check box and the text that goes with it (considering them to be a unit):	.15 inch
For check boxes within a sentence, after the last optional item	.20 inch

The reason for allowing more space around a check box and text when they are within a sentence is to show that the check box and text function as a unit.

A Designer Toolkit template with the correct spacing between elements is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

2. a. ☐ Petitioner is married to the respondent, and no action is pending in any court for dissolution, legal separation, or nullity.

The receiver ☐ shall ☐ shall not work on weekends.

**IMPORTANT TIP FOR SETTING ACCURATE SPACING BETWEEN ELEMENTS:** Turn on the grid function in the View menu. Change the grid setting in the Tools menu so that the distance between the dots in a grid line is .05 inch. One grid dot apart will be .05 inch and two grid dots apart will be .10 inch and so on. Magnify the view to make it easier to see the spacing.

**ANOTHER USEFUL TIP FOR SETTING ACCURATE SPACING BETWEEN ELEMENTS:** One *9-point Arial* space roughly equals .05 inch; two spaces roughly equal .10 inch and so on.

**A USEFUL TIP FOR CHECKING THE VERTICAL SPACING BETWEEN ELEMENTS:**

1. Go to View > Ruler.
2. Move your cursor into the left margin near (but not touching) the bottom item.
3. Click and hold down your left mouse button.
4. Move the mouse upward.
5. A line shows where your cursor started and where it currently is. The status bar will show the measurement in inches.

## **TITLE OF A FORM**

Often the question arises: What is the official title of the form, to be used when citing the form in a rule of court, another form, or a publication?

The title of the form is found in the footer, not in the caption box. The caption box may contain check boxes for options; the title in the footer summarizes these.

The official title of the form is the wording that is in all capital letters in the footer. It does not include anything in parentheses below it, such as a form family or code section.

# Parts of a Form

## CAPTION

The caption block must be at least 3.5 inches wide.

Designer Toolkit templates for captions are available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

## Attorney/Party Information (top left box)

### a. Attorney or party without attorney

Standard civil form: *6-point Arial*, left aligned, with space for the State Bar number to the right. Below the heading should be four lines for the attorney name, firm, street address, and city and state, if there is sufficient room on the form. If not, three lines are acceptable, but not two.

ATTORNEY OR PARTY WITHOUT ATTORNEY (*Name, State Bar number, and address*):

### b. Hashmark

A small hashmark appears on the first blank line in the field containing the attorney or party name and address. When the form is filled in by typewriter, the typewriter is aligned to the hashmark. The hashmark is a one-half-point line, aligned on the left side of the caption box, and is .12 inch wide.

### c. Telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address

Spaces for telephone and fax numbers and an e-mail address appear beneath the address field, in *6-point all-cap Arial*. The space for the telephone number should be long enough for an area code, a number, and an extension. The space for the optional fax number does not need to be long enough for an extension. The telephone number and e-mail address are right aligned on the colon.

Some older forms do not have spaces for the fax number and e-mail address. You should add them, with (*Optional*) after the wording.

TELEPHONE NO.:  
E-MAIL ADDRESS (*Optional*):

FAX NO. (*Optional*):

#### **d. Party represented**

A space for indicating the party represented appears beneath the address field, in *6-point all-cap Arial*, followed by a title-cap italicized instruction. It is right aligned with the telephone number and e-mail address.

ATTORNEY FOR (*Name*):

#### **County and Court Address (second left box)**

##### **a. Superior court and county**

The court title on the first line appears in *8-point all-cap bold Arial*, left aligned in box, with a space for inserting the county name:

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF**

##### **b. Court address**

The court address and any branch name appear immediately beneath the title of the court, in *6-point all-cap Arial*, right aligned to the end of the party-represented line (see above).

STREET ADDRESS:  
MAILING ADDRESS:  
CITY AND ZIP CODE:  
BRANCH NAME:

When space is tight:

Insert name of court, street and mailing address, and branch name, if any:

#### **Title of Case (third left box)**

##### **a. Civil proceeding**

Use “plaintiff” and “defendant” in a simple civil case; use the multipurpose second option if the parties could also be “petitioners” or “respondents.” The case title appears in *8-point all-cap Arial*, right aligned (when possible) to the court address in the box above.

PLAINTIFF:  
DEFENDANT:

PETITIONER/PLAINTIFF:  
RESPONDENT/DEFENDANT:

**b. Family proceeding**

MARRIAGE OF  
PETITIONER:  
RESPONDENT:

PETITIONER/PLAINTIFF:  
RESPONDENT/DEFENDANT:

PETITIONER/PLAINTIFF:  
RESPONDENT/DEFENDANT:  
OTHER PARENT:

**c. Juvenile proceeding**

CASE NAME:

CHILD'S NAME:

**d. Probate proceeding**

ESTATE OF *(Name)*:

Guardianship/conservatorship proceeding:

GUARDIANSHIP OF THE ☐ PERSON ☐ ESTATE OF *(Name)*:

☐ GUARDIANSHIP ☐ CONSERVATORSHIP OF *(Name)*:  
☐ MINOR ☐ CONSERVATEE

CONSERVATORSHIP OF *(Name)*:  
PROPOSED CONSERVATEE (only for filing initial forms)

CONSERVATORSHIP OF THE ☐ PERSON ☐ ESTATE OF *(Name)*:  
☐ CONSERVATEE ☐ PROPOSED CONSERVATEE

**e. Adoption proceeding**

ADOPTION OF:

*(Name of each adopting parent)*

CHILD'S NAME:

**f. Emancipation proceeding**

EMANCIPATION OF *(Name)*:

**g. Criminal proceeding**

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
v.  
DEFENDANT:

**h. Discovery proceedings, worksheets, etc.**

SHORT TITLE:

**Title of Form (fourth left box)**

The main title is *10-point all-cap bold Arial*, 10-point spacing, centered vertically and horizontally in the box. Generally a one-line title is vertically centered in a two-line box, a two-line title is vertically centered in a three-line box, etc., as space permits. The form family is not included.

A subtitle and/or category, on a second line, is *9-point title-cap bold Arial*.

A code or rule reference, on a second line, is *9-point title-cap bold Arial*, in parentheses.

Check boxes within the title are the standard check box: .125 inch high by .250 inch wide, horizontally aligned, alternatives spaced .2 inch apart.

A Designer Toolkit template for a check box is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

**APPEARANCE, STIPULATION, AND WAIVERS**

**NOTICE TO CONSUMER OR EMPLOYEE AND OBJECTION**  
(Code Civ. Proc., §§ 1985.3, 1985.6)

**STATEMENT OF DAMAGES**  
(Personal Injury or Wrongful Death)

**LETTERS OF GUARDIANSHIP**  
☐ Person    ☐ Estate

**Form Number and Court Clerk Box (top right box)**

The form number appears immediately above the court clerk box in the top right corner, *10-point all-cap bold Arial*, right aligned.



The box for the court clerk stamp is approximately two inches by two inches (minimum), with text centered on the top line, *6-point all-cap bold italic Arial*.

*FOR COURT USE ONLY*

## **County Recorder's Area (optional top right area)**

If the form is designed for recording by a county recorder, an area is reserved for the recorder's use at the top right of the first page, at least 2.5 inches from the top of the page, with no boundary line at the top and right margins. The attorney caption box at the top left of the form should extend no more than 3.75 inches from the left margin of the page, and the form designator should be placed at the top of the attorney caption box just to the left of the vertical line separating that box from the recorder's area. A second line of text below the "Attorney or party without attorney" line in the attorney caption box should be added, reading, "After recording return to:," preceded by a check box if recording is optional.

The case number and clerk filing stamp boxes should be placed below the recorder's area on the right side. The recorder's area includes the required text, centered, in *6-point all-cap bold italic Arial*, placed just above the horizontal boundary line at the bottom of the area.

*FOR RECORDER'S USE ONLY*

A Designer Toolkit template for a county recorder's area is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

## **Case Number**

The case number is in a box immediately beneath the court clerk box. It is *6-point all-cap Arial*, left aligned.

CASE NUMBER:

## **Motion Papers**

For motion papers, California Rules of Court require the hearing date, time, and location; the hearing judge; the date action filed; and the trial date to be listed in captions of motion papers. This information would be in *6-point all-cap Arial*, single spaced or otherwise aligned to conserve space.

HEARING DATE:  
TIME:  
DEPT.:  
BEFORE HON.:  
DATE ACTION FILED  
TRIAL DATE: [N/A if none]

## Short Title on Subsequent Pages

### a. Caption box

Subsequent pages of a form filed with the court include an abbreviated caption box at the top of the page, containing a shortened case title and the case number. The box usually contains three lines of fill area, space permitting. A hashmark for typewriter alignment appears left aligned on the first line. The party identifiers appear in *8-point all-cap Arial*, right aligned. The case number heading appears in *6-point all-cap Arial*. If a page contains only instructions or the form itself is not filed with a court, no short title box is necessary.

### b. Form number

The form number is repeated at the top right of subsequent pages, to make it easier to locate a particular form.

A Designer Toolkit template for a short title is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board. It includes a space for the form number.

## Specialized Forms: Attachments

Some forms fulfill a specialized function and do not include all the caption elements that are found in most forms. Several Judicial Council forms function as attachments to other forms (for example, see forms JV-101, MC-020, NC-110, and POS-020(P)).

### a. Form number

If a form that is an attachment attaches to only one form, then its number should be the same number as that form plus (A). If a form that is an attachment can be attached to several different forms, then it should have its own unique number plus (A). If there can be multiple attachments to a form, such as the juvenile dependency attachments, create a set with numbers that follow each other. They should still have (A) after the number. There is no space between the number and the (A).

Because this is a new numbering scheme, the (A) will need to be added when a new form is created or an existing form is being revised. For the examples given above, the numbers will be JV-101(A), MC-020(A), NC-110(A), and POS-020(P)(A).

### b. Format

Currently there is no consistent way of treating the titles and footers of these forms. The following format has been created, which should serve as a model for other attachment forms.

**Caption.** The abbreviated caption box that is used on subsequent pages of forms that are not attachments (see page 16) is used as the caption box of the attachment form. The form number should appear at the top right.

**Title.** The title appears at the top, below the caption box, centered, in *10-point all-cap Arial*. A form family, if any, is on the next line in *9-point title-cap Arial*. A line below the title, also in *9-point Arial*, indicates the form that this form is an attachment to. This line is **not** part of the form title for purposes of the footer.

REMOVAL FROM CUSTODIAL PARENT—PLACEMENT WITH NONPARENT  
Attachment to *Findings and Orders After Dispositional Hearing* (form JV-28)

## Specialized Forms: Information Sheets

The preference is for an information sheet (or instruction sheet) to be a separate form, unless a statute requires that it be part of the form.

If the information sheet applies to one form only, it should have that form number plus the letters INFO (for example, FL-192-INFO). If there is a translation of the information sheet, the language designator would come at the end, such as FL-192-INFO-S. Hyphens separate the parts of the form number.

If the information sheet applies to more than one form, it would have its own unique number (in proximity to related forms), with the letters INFO attached as above.

There is no caption box for an information sheet. The form number is at the top right and the title is centered in *12-point all-cap bold Arial* at the top of the form.

Existing examples of information sheets are forms FL-611 and FL-393 (which will need to have INFO added when they are revised):

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR SERVICE OF PROCESS**

**INFORMATION SHEET—HOW TO OPPOSE A REQUEST TO CHANGE CHILD,  
SPOUSAL, OR FAMILY SUPPORT**

## BODY OF FORM

### Font

The font for body text is *9-point Arial*. (Resist the temptation to make the font larger, even if there is not much text on the form.) See the discussion of individual form elements below for the specific fonts for those elements.

### Spacing

See the discussion of spacing on pages 8–9.

### Item Numbering

Each item of information in a form should have a number or letter. The exceptions are some types of unnumbered headings. (See “Headings” on page 20.)

Please note that it is necessary to have at least two of each type of item number or letter. If you have a 1., you need a 2. If you have an a., you need to also have at least a b. In most forms, this is not a problem, but occasionally you may need to rewrite and break an item down into more elements.

Designer Toolkit templates for the item levels are available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

For purposes of alignment, the item number or letter and the text of the item should be placed in separate text fields. Consistent spacing between these fields is critical for a uniform look. There should be .10 inch of space between an item number or letter and the following text or check box. (See “Spacing” on pages 8–9 for further details.)

When indenting, align the lower-level item with the beginning of the text of the higher-level item.

#### **a. First level**

Each first-level item is numbered with an Arabic numeral, followed by a period. Items are numbered consecutively, even if there are intervening, centered headings. The consecutive numbering continues in an order, if it is part of the form.

The text following each Arabic numeral is block indented. If a numbered item is optional, the check box follows the Arabic number.

It is desirable to avoid carrying over part of a first-level item onto the next page. In other words, it is preferable to include all of item 4. on one page and start item 5. on the next page. If it is necessary to break an item, repeat the number at the top of the next page. Do not use a continued line, such as (continued on next page).

If the item numbering goes to 10. and the numbers are followed by check boxes, align the check boxes, even though it means less than .10 inch of space between the number and the check box.

- 3. Petitioner requests
- 4. ☐ I consent to the request
- 5. Petitioner ☐ does ☐ does not consent to the request

## **b. Second through sixth levels**

Each second-level item is labeled with a lowercase letter followed by a period, starting with “a.” Whenever two or more items appear within a numbered item, they must be lettered. Text following each lettered item is block indented. If a lettered item is optional, the check box follows the letter.

If the lettering goes as far as the letter “l,” that letter should be italicized to avoid confusing it with the number “1.” (For example, j., k., *l*, m.)

- 2. I request that service of the registration of support be vacated because
  - a. ☐ I am not the obligor
  - b. ☐ the court that issued the order
- 4. a. All orders previously made in this action
- b. Obligor is the parent of and shall pay

Each third-level item is labeled with an Arabic number in parentheses, starting with “(1).”

Each fourth-level item is labeled with a lowercase letter in parentheses, starting with “(a).” (See above discussion regarding italicizing the letter “l.” The parentheses would not be italicized.)

Each fifth-level item is labeled with a lowercase Roman numeral in parentheses, starting with “(i).” It’s rarely necessary to use a fifth-level designator.

- 4. a. Decedent died on *(date)*: at *(place)*:
- b. **Appointment of personal representative** *(check all applicable boxes)*
  - (1) Appointment of executor or administrator with will annexed:
    - (a) ☐ Proposed executor is named as executor in the will and consents to act.
    - (b) ☐ No executor is named in the will.

If you should have to go to a sixth level (an unusual situation), the items are labeled with capital letters in parentheses, starting with (A).

## Headings

### a. Unnumbered headings

Unnumbered headings may appear in forms, sometimes between numbered items. If the heading is flush left, it usually appears in *9-point all-cap bold Arial*. If the heading is a partial phrase that leads into the items below, do not use a colon.

**THE COURT FINDS  
THE COURT ORDERS**

Centered unnumbered headings may appear to introduce different parts of a form. Centered headings usually appear in *10-point all-cap bold Arial*.

**NOTICE OF HEARING  
DECLARATION  
FINDINGS  
ORDER  
PROOF OF SERVICE  
NOTICE TO CREDITORS  
CLERK'S CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

### b. Numbered headings on a separate line

An Arabic number may be followed by a bold category description; subitems immediately follow. The category description is usually initial cap, followed by lowercase. Sometimes it is all cap, but this style should be reserved for major divisions of the form and used sparingly. In both cases, be consistent and apply the same style for all headings that are on the same level and are alike.

3. **Tax information**

- a. ☐ I last filed taxes in \_\_\_\_\_ (year)
- b. My tax filing status is:
  - ☐ single ☐ head of household ☐ married filing separately
  - ☐ married filing jointly with (specify name):

3. **PERSONS TO BE PROTECTED** (List full names and ages of all persons to be protected; also list relationship to child in item 1):

### c. Numbered run-in headings

Alternatively, a numbered item may begin with a bold phrase run into the following text, separated by a period or colon.

7. **Management company.** The receiver may employ the management company of (specify):

Another approach is to bold the first few words of the sentence.

17. **Petitioner's efforts** to obtain the highest and best price reasonably attainable for the property were as follows (specify activities taken to expose the property to the market):

## Check Boxes

*Note:* See the discussion of spacing on pages 8–9 for spacing between check boxes and text.

Blank check boxes precede optional or alternative language in forms. If a whole numbered or lettered item is optional, the check box immediately follows the number or letter.

The standard check box is .125 inch high by .250 inch wide (one-eighth inch by one-fourth inch). Use the check box function, not the rectangle function, when inserting a check box so that it can be a fillable field.

A Designer Toolkit template for a check box is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board, as well as one that includes the correct spacing before and after a check box.

2. Defendant (*name*):
- a. ☐ is a natural person who
    - (1) ☐ resides in California.
    - (2) ☐ does not reside in California.
  - b. ☐ is a corporation
    - (1) ☐ qualified to do business in California.
    - (2) ☐ not qualified to do business in California.
4. ☐ Petitioner is named in the will of a deceased ☐ mother ☐ father as an intended adoptive parent and the child has no other parent.

A paragraph or sentence can be confusing when you are trying to cram too many requests for information and check boxes into it. Only use check boxes for alternative items within a sentence when you are limited in space. It's much better to stack the alternatives on separate lines, as in the example above. For another useful example of good and bad structuring of sentences with check boxes, see "Tips for Writing or Printing a Form," pages 5–6.

If you do have several check boxes with alternative answers within a sentence, and each completes the beginning of the sentence, the period comes only after the last item.

- c. Plaintiff is ☐ a vexatious litigant ☐ an upstanding citizen.

## Capitalization of Lists

If separately numbered or lettered items in a list are complete sentences or follow an introductory phrase that ends with a colon, the first word in each item usually begins with a capital letter.

- d. (1) ☐ Will waives bond.  
(2) ☐ All beneficiaries are adults.
2. The following persons are party to this agreement:
- a. ☐ Adoptive mother (*name*):
  - b. ☐ Adoptive father (*name*):

If itemized lists are preceded by a partial phrase and no colon, the first word in each item usually is lowercase.

2. Petitioner seeks to
  - a. ☐ enforce the agreement.
  - b. ☐ modify the agreement.

## Alignment

All paragraphs of the same level are left aligned. Text continuing to the following line aligns under the first letter of the first line, even if the item is preceded by a check box.

5. a. Decedent is survived by
  - (1) ☐ spouse
  - (2) ☐ child
  - (3) xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
- b. ☐ xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
xxxxxxxxxx
6. ☐ Decedent's will does not preclude
7. The names, relationships, ages, etc.

## Columns

Text can be reformatted into two columns to conserve space. Each column is left aligned. If each item in a list is short, the list can be broken into two columns when necessary to conserve space. Number the items vertically by column.

2. Petitioner is the
  - a. ☐ mother
  - b. ☐ father
  - c. ☐ child
  - d. ☐ guardian
  - e. ☐ social worker
  - f. ☐ probation officer
  - g. ☐ present caretaker of child
  - h. ☐ court-appointed special advocate
  - i. ☐ representative of Indian child's tribe
  - j. ☐ other (*specify relationship*):

### a. Column headers

Any headings above columns of text are usually centered over the columns. As with other unnumbered headings, they usually appear in *10-point all-cap bold Arial*.



If column headers appear above blank fill areas, the column headers appear in *9-point sentence-cap underscored Arial*. For example:

3. Custody of the minor children is ordered as follows:

<u>Child's name</u>	<u>Date of birth</u>	<u>Legal custody to</u>	<u>Physical custody to</u>
a.			
b.			
c.			

#### **b. Column totals of dollar amounts**

If dollar amounts on different lines are totaled up on another line, generally the blank spaces for the dollar amounts are aligned vertically.

1. Total appraisal by representative, guardian, or conservator:	\$
2. Total appraisal by referee:	\$
<b>TOTAL:</b>	\$

### **Blank Fill Areas; Fillable Forms**

Blank fill areas in forms are usually preceded by a colon to indicate a fill area follows. Fill areas do *not* have underscores or blank lines; this facilitates filling out the forms by computer or typewriter. The exception is a line to indicate the number of pages attached.

Blank fill areas should be as large as possible to allow sufficient room for facts and information, but this is balanced against the need to create forms on as few pages as possible. When space permits, maximize the blank spaces for general facts.

Fillable fields are added to the forms by American LegalNet, using Adobe Acrobat. This step makes it possible for staff in law firms and self-represented litigants to fill out the forms on computers. The font for text in the fillable fields is Times New Roman, to distinguish that text from the Arial text of the form itself, and varies from 8 to 12 points. The space that we leave is only a placeholder for the fillable field, but it is important that we consider how much text needs to go into the fillable field and leave enough room for it.

When creating or revising a form, be aware of where the fillable fields will go and allow space for them. In the example below, there are four separate fields, including the check box, which is in its own field.

Use one text field here. ☐ Use a separate text field after the check box.  
Start the next line of the paragraph in a separate text field and continue that field through as many lines of the paragraph as needed, but end it above the next fillable field.

**TIPS FOR ALLOWING ENOUGH SPACE FOR FILLABLE FIELDS:**

If you want to be sure that you have allowed enough space, insert a fillable field in the OmniForm file. Then go into the form filler to test whether there is adequate space for the amount of text that will be needed. Be careful to delete all text you place in the field. (The fillable field that you add will disappear when the form is converted to a PDF and will then be added back in by ALN.)

For a name and address, allow three lines; for an address, allow two lines.

To be sure that you've left enough room for a county name, test it with "San Bernardino," the county with the longest name.

## Instructions

Italicized instructions in parentheses often precede the colon before blank fill areas. Instructions should be used when it is necessary to clarify what should appear in the fill area. The opening and closing parentheses, the instruction, and the colon are all italicized.

1. Person served (*name*):
6. Other (*specify*):
3. Types of remedies that apply (*check all that apply*):
2. Injunctive or other order (*specify which order was violated, how the order was violated, and when the order was violated*):

If it is clear to the user what information needs to appear in the blank, instructions are not required.

- c. The parties are ordered to attend custody mediation services as follows:  
Date:  
Time:
1. Indian child's name:

## Dollar Amounts

Blanks for inserting dollar amounts are preceded by a colon, two spaces, and the dollar sign.

2. The total amount due is: \$
- c. Deposits of: \$ are ordered to be placed in a blocked account.

## References to Attachments

When space is limited for users to fill in facts or other information, an optional reference can be added that the item is continued in an attachment. This reference usually appears immediately after the opening text for the particular item, but can also appear at the end of the blank field, immediately before the next lettered or numbered item. The reference ends with a period but does not include periods for the item numbers (4d(2) rather than 4.d.(2)).

- ☐ Continued in Attachment 8b.

Often the number of pages attached is noted, particularly if there are several attachments. The underline for the number of pages should be five characters.

- 6. Number of pages attached: \_\_\_\_\_

If the form includes the signature of a judicial officer, the following line is added in all caps.

- ☐ SIGNATURE FOLLOWS LAST ATTACHMENT

## References to Forms, Codes, and Rules of Court

### a. Judicial Council forms

Titles of forms are capitalized and italicized. See page 10 for a discussion of what is included in the title of a form. The word “form” preceding the form number is lowercase. The numbers of joint forms are separated with a slash.

- a. The following documents must be personally served on the defendant:
  - (1) *Order to Show Cause and Temporary Restraining Order* (form CH-120)
  - (2) *Petition for Injunction Prohibiting Civil Harassment* (form CH-100)
  - (3) *Blank Response to Petition for Injunction Prohibiting Harassment* (form CH-110)

*Inventory and Appraisal* (form DE-160/GC-040)

NOTICE: Please read alternative dispute resolution form ADR-105, *Information Regarding Rights After Attorney-Client Fee Arbitration*, promptly and before completing this form.

### b. Code sections

Code references in the body of the form should be minimized, but their use should be at the discretion of the attorney drafting the form.

If a code is cited in parentheses anywhere on a form, the name of the code should be abbreviated and the section symbol used. It may be helpful for self-represented litigants to give the full name of the code at first mention, whether or not in parentheses. In particular, it is not necessary to spell out Welfare and Institutions Code, except possibly at first mention. The code abbreviations can be found in the *California Style Manual*.

- b. ☐ The plaintiff has not qualified for a fee waiver, but the sheriff or marshal shall serve this order without prepayment of fee, under Government Code section 6103.2.

1. a. Petitioner (*name*) is a beneficially interested person, entitled under section 103450 of the California Health and Safety Code to an order establishing the fact and the date and place of the death of the deceased person named in item 2.

CAUTION: An appeal in a limited civil case (Code Civ. Proc., § 85) may be taken ONLY to the appellate division of the superior court (Code Civ. Proc., § 904.2) or to the superior court (Code Civ. Proc., § 116.710 [small claims cases]).

### c. Rules of court

Following the *AOC Style Guide*, there are two ways of referring to the California Rules of Court.

1. In text: See rule 224 of the California Rules of Court
2. In parentheses: (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 224)

I request appointment under rule 4.117 of the California Rules of Court.

(Clerk may grant in full a nondiscretionary fee waiver; see Cal. Rules of Court, rule 985(d).)

## Notice for the Hearing Impaired

The Access and Fairness Advisory Committee recommends that a box with instructions on requesting accommodations for deaf and hearing-impaired individuals be included on all forms where an appearance is required by the responding party. The notice includes the international symbol of access for hearing loss (below). Examples of the notice can be found on forms GC-020 and EA-120.

It consists of an international symbol and the following wording:



### Request for Accommodations

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five court days before the hearing or trial. Contact the clerk's office or go to [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms) for *Request for Accommodations by Persons With Disabilities and Order* (form MC-410). (Civil Code, § 54.8)

A Designer Toolkit template for the notice for the hearing impaired is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

## Date and Signature

### a. Date

The date is *9-point Arial*, flush left, followed by a colon. It is not followed by a line.

Date:

A Designer Toolkit template for the date is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

### b. Signature

There are many variations of a signature line. The most common is to have two lines, with all-cap instructions centered in parentheses under each line. The lines are solid, not dotted. The font is *6-point Arial*. Note that the term “JUDICIAL OFFICER” is now used rather than “JUDGE.”

A *dingbat* of a triangle pointing toward the signature space is used for parties but not for judicial officers. The dingbat is *20-point Wingding 3*. It is .25 inch high by .25 inch wide.

Some of the variations are:

(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)	(SIGNATURE)
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)	(SIGNATURE OF PARTY OR ATTORNEY)
(TYPE OR PRINT NAME)	(SIGNATURE OF DECLARANT)
	JUDICIAL OFFICER
Clerk, by _____, Deputy	

The width of the blank line for a clerk (deputy) signature is 2.7 inches.

A Designer Toolkit template for a signature line is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

## FOOTER

Designer Toolkit templates for footers, for both first page and subsequent pages, are available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

### First Page

#### **a. Mandatory or optional; revision date (left side, below line)**

The left-hand information in the footer states whether the form is mandatory or optional; that it is issued by the Judicial Council of California; the form number; whether the form is “New” or “Rev.” (revised); and the revision, adoption, or approval date (in brackets, with the month spelled out). (Mandatory forms are adopted; optional forms are approved.) This information is centered in the space. The font is *6-point Arial*.

Form Approved for Optional Use  
Judicial Council of California  
SC-110 [New January 1, 2005]

Form Adopted for Mandatory Use  
Judicial Council of California  
FL-170 [Rev. January 1, 2005]

Note that all probate forms became mandatory on January 1, 2000. Publishers of the forms were asked to note this at the bottom of all probate forms that were not already mandatory, but without changing the effective date of the form.

Form Approved by the  
Judicial Council of California  
DE-140 [Rev. January 1, 1998]  
Mandatory Form [1/1/2000]

Occasionally, a form has additional information following the standard language, such as:

Corrected March 1, 2004  
Approved by DOJ

#### **b. Title of form (center, below line)**

In the center of the footer, the title of the form is centered, in *10-point all-cap bold Arial*. (See page 10 for a discussion of what constitutes the title of the form.) The title in the footer, in almost all cases, should match the title in the caption. Occasionally, the title in the caption has been shortened for space reasons. The title in the footer should be the full version. It may include all alternatives that were indicated in the caption by check boxes.

Caption:

DECLARATION FOR DEFAULT OR UNCONTESTED  
☐ DISSOLUTION or ☐ LEGAL SEPARATION

Footer:

**DECLARATION FOR DEFAULT OR UNCONTESTED DISSOLUTION OR LEGAL SEPARATION  
(Family Law)**

The form family, if any, is on a separate line below the title, in parentheses, *9-point title-cap bold Arial*. The use of parentheses in the footer should be reserved for form families. Consideration should be given to whether a form family is really needed on a particular form when drafting or revising a form. It should be included only if there is a functional reason for it, as determined by the attorney preparing the form. Otherwise, the letters in the form number are sufficient to indicate the area of law. Common form families are Family Law, Governmental, Domestic Violence Prevention, Uniform Parentage, Civil Harassment, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (this list does not include all the form families).

The preference is not to provide a code reference in the form title in the footer unless it is necessary. If it is necessary, it should be part of the title (for example, form JV-310, *Proof of Service—Juvenile Hearing Under Section 366.26 of the Welfare and Institutions Code*).

If a designation such as “Juvenile” or “Juvenile Dependency” is needed, it should be part of the title with a dash (for example, form JV-300, *Notice of Hearing on Selection of a Permanent Plan—Juvenile*).

Even if a particular page is a specialized part of the form, such as an information sheet or instructions on how to fill out the form, the footer should still bear the exact title of the form, not a title such as “Information Sheet.” The preference is to make the information sheet or other instructions a separate form (see page 17).

**c. References to rules of court and code sections; California Courts Web site address  
(right side, below line)**

Citations to relevant codes and rules of court go on the right, right aligned, in *6-point Arial*. Use the full names of the codes rather than the abbreviations, but use the section symbol rather than spelling out the word “section.” Be sure to spell out the word “and” rather than using the ampersand.

The address of the California Courts Web site goes below, in italics. (Note that on some of the current forms the address is in roman; this should be corrected as the forms are revised.)

Family Code, § 2336;  
Cal. Rules of Court, rule 1241  
*www.courtinfo.ca.gov*

#### **d. Pagination (right side, above line)**

The number of pages goes *above the line* on the first page, in *6-point bold Arial*, right aligned, in the format:

**Page 1 of 2**

Even if the form is one-sided, the pagination is noted:

**Page 1 of 1**

### **Subsequent Pages**

#### **a. Form number and date (left side, below line)**

On subsequent pages, the left-hand footer lists the form number, then the date of approval or adoption or the last revision in brackets. The month is spelled out.

FL-626 [New January 1, 2005]

APP-004 [Rev. January 1, 2005]

#### **b. Title (center, below line)**

In the center, the title is repeated in exactly the same wording as on the first page.

#### **c. Page number (right side, below line)**

This time the page number is below the line, *6-point bold Arial*, right aligned.

**Page 3 of 4**

### **Specialized Forms: Attachments**

The footer for a form that is an attachment to another form should include the exact title of the form that is found at the top of the form and the form family, if any. It does not include the line that indicates what form this form is an attachment to. However, the title of the form itself may include that information, such as in *Attachment to Proof of Personal Service—Civil (Persons Served)* (form POS-020(P)).

Note that new attachment forms and existing ones that are being revised will have “(A)” as part of the form number (see page 16).



For the example on page 17, the footer would be:

**REMOVAL FROM CUSTODIAL PARENT—PLACEMENT WITH NONPARENT**

## **Specialized Forms: Information Sheets**

For forms that are information sheets, such as FL-393 and FL-611, the form title that is at the top of the page, usually starting with the words “Information Sheet,” is centered in the footer, in *10-point all-cap bold Arial*.

Note that new information sheets and existing ones that are being revised will have “INFO” as part of the form number (see page 17).

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR SERVICE OF PROCESS**

**INFORMATION SHEET—HOW TO OPPOSE A REQUEST  
TO CHANGE CHILD, SPOUSAL, OR FAMILY SUPPORT**

# Plain-Language Forms

## GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

### Margins

Left, right, and top: .5 inch  
Bottom: .5 inch from last text

### Fonts

Plain-language forms use both Arial and Times New Roman, in varying sizes. Apostrophes and quotation marks are straight in Arial and curly or “smart” in Times New Roman.

### Horizontal Spacing Between Elements

Leave two spaces between elements. For example: a. Text

## CAPTION

### Header (page 1, top left)

#### a. Form number

For two-letter forms (for example, JV-295; DV-100): *18-point bold Arial*, white, centered in black box; for multiletter forms (for example, ADOPT-200): *16-point bold Arial*, white, centered in black box. The box is .358 inch high by 1.467 inches wide.

#### b. Form title

The title is *14-point bold Arial* with 14-point spacing, flush left, centered vertically on the form number box. Leave 0.125 inch space between form number box and the form title.

#### c. Line below header

The line is 2 points. Leave .08 inch vertical space between box bottom and line bottom.

## Court Information Boxes (top right)

*Clerk stamps date here when form is filed.*

*Fill in court name and street address:*

**Superior Court of California, County of**

*Clerk fills in case number when form is filed. (Original filing)*

*Fill in case number: (Subsequent papers)*

**Case Number:**

### **a. Instructions inside clerk stamp box and above court box and case number box**

The text is *8-point italic Arial* with single spacing.

### **b. Headings inside court box and case number box**

The text is *9-point bold Arial* with automatic spacing.

### **c. Borders of boxes**

The borders are 1 point.

### **d. Clerk stamp box**

The box is 2 inches high by 2.5 inches wide.

### **e. Court box**

The box is 1.125 inches high by 2.5 inches wide.

### **f. Case number box**

The box is .5 inch high by 2.5 inches wide.

## Header on Subsequent Pages (top)

### a. Identifier

The text is *12-point Times New Roman* with 14-point spacing, flush left.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

### b. Heading inside case number box

The text is *9-point bold Arial* with automatic spacing. Leave .08 inch vertical space between box bottom and line bottom.

### c. Border of case number box

The border is 1 point. Please note: The blank for “Your name” and the bottom side of the case number box should align.

### d. Line below header

The line is 2 points. Leave .08 inch vertical space between box bottom and line bottom.

## BODY OF FORM

### Font

#### a. Body copy

Leave a .10 inch space between the line at the top and the start of the form text.

The text is *11-point Times New Roman* with 14-point spacing, flush left. The font is the same for information sheets. Leave 1 blank line between items and subitems.

- Times New Roman Italic and Times New Roman Bold may be used for emphasis of a few words within body copy.
- For instructions within body copy, see italic body copy below.

#### b. Italic body copy

The text is *11-point italic Times New Roman* with 14-point spacing, flush left. The italic typeface may be used for instructions within blocks of 11-point body copy or under signature lines.

**c. Type below signature line**

The font is *11-point italic Times New Roman*.

**d. Spanish body copy**

The font is *11-point Times New Roman* with 14-point spacing.

**Lines**

Blank lines under fillable fields are one-half point. Use 14-point line spacing for blanks.

**Boxes**

Borders are 1 point. (For example, DV-130, items 2 and 4.)

**Headings**

**a. Headline/Major headings**

The text is *14-point bold Arial* with 15-point spacing, flush left. Leave a 9-point blank after a heading.

**What orders do you want? Check the boxes that apply to your case.**

**Clerk's Certificate**

**Proof of Personal Service**

**b. Item heading**

The text is *12-point bold Arial* with 14-point spacing, flush left.

**Personal Conduct Orders**

**c. Information sheet/pamphlet item heading**

The text is *12-point bold Arial* with 14-point spacing, flush left.

**What is "service"?**

#### **d. “White on Black” Headings and Notices**

The text is *12-point bold Arial*, white, centered horizontally and vertically in a .25 inch high rectangle.

The black box should not extend from the beginning and end of the text.

### **Bubble Numbers**

#### **a. Large bubble numbers (in margin)**

The number is *11-point bold Arial*, circle text, centered in a .25 inch by .25 inch circle with a one-half-point border.

The space after the large bubble numbers is .125 inch.

#### **b. Small bubble numbers (within body copy)**

The number is *10-point bold Arial* (8-point for two-digit numbers), circle text, centered in a .175 inch by .175 inch circle with a one-half-point border.

Leave 1 space before and after a small bubble number. However, do not leave a space between a bubble number and punctuation following it.

A Designer Toolkit template for bubble numbers is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

### **Check Boxes and Other Special Characters**

#### **a. Open check boxes**

The check boxes are .125 inch square. The borders are one-half point. Leave 2 spaces (.10 inch) before and after check boxes that follow item numbers.

#### **b. Multiple check boxes on same line**

Leave at least 3 spaces between short, unnumbered items on the same line: Sex: M F  
Leave 6 spaces between multiple, unnumbered items occurring within a sentence:

x. Home Job Car of person in 1

### **c. Check boxes with check marks**

The check boxes are .125 inch square. The borders are three-fourths point. A check mark is superimposed in the box.

### **d. Arrow on signature line**

The arrow is a *Wingding 3*, .25 inch by .25 inch. The arrow is inserted as a symbol.

### **e. Solid round bullets**

Small, solid, round bullets may be used for a list (see form DV-600 for an example). The bullet is *10-point Times New Roman*, a .12 inch by .233 inch circle with a border that is one-half point.

A Designer Toolkit template for the bullet is available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

### **f. Balloons**

Square balloons with rounded corners are available for:

- Trial Date
- Hearing Date
- End Date
- Sign Here

The text is *10-point bold Arial*, centered in a rounded, square box .5 inch high by .625 inch wide, with 2-point borders rounded to .15 inch.

Round balloons with question marks inside are available in two versions.

Designer Toolkit templates for the balloons are available on the OmniForm Users Bulletin Board.

### **g. Date line**

Leave a 1.5 inch blank for the date.

## FOOTER

### First Page

#### a. Line

The line is 2 points.

#### b. Publication and authority information (bottom left)

The text is *6-point Arial* with 8-point spacing, flush left.

Judicial Council of California, [www.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov)  
Revised January 1, 2005, Mandatory Form  
Family Code, §§ 6200 and 6201

#### c. Form title

The title is *12-point bold Arial* with 12-point spacing (type may be reduced to 11 points to fit a long title), centered.

### Request for Order

#### d. Form family or other information

The text is *10-point bold Arial* with 10-point spacing, centered below form title, in parentheses. If space is an issue, 9-point type may be used.

**(Domestic Violence Prevention)**

#### e. Form number (bottom right)

The form number is *9-point bold Arial*.

#### f. Page number (bottom right)

The page number follows the form number, separated by a comma. It is *8-point Arial* with 10-point spacing, flush right.

DV-100, Page 1 of 3

#### g. Continued arrow (bottom right)

The arrow is an *11-point Wingding*, flush right.



## **Subsequent Pages**

The only thing different about subsequent pages is that the publication information on the left includes only the date of revision, adoption, or approval.

Revised January 1, 2006

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*Have comments regarding this manual? They are welcome! By working together, we can make this process more efficient and easier. Please send your suggestions to Lura Dymond in the Editing and Graphics Group.*